



Issue 21

The Steward

*Newsletter of Alberta's Natural and Protected Areas
and the People Who Care for Them*

JAN 18 1993

January 1993

New Natural Areas

Six new Natural Areas and additions to three others have been designated under the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act. These are the first sites to be established since June 1990. In total they add 2429 ha to the legislatively protected Natural Area category - a seven per cent increase in total area.

New Sites

501 Alexo

- 33.4 ha approximately 20 km east of Nordegg on Highway 11; features include a variety of forest types, scenic views of the Front Ranges from vantage points and relics from an abandoned mine site. Steward: Youth Volunteer Centre.

511 Lac La Nonne

- 57 ha on north shore of Lac La Nonne, approximately 20 km south of Barrhead; features include relatively undisturbed lake shoreline, small wetlands, large white birch and spruce trees and successional stages of balsam poplar forest. Steward: Lac La Nonne Recreation Association.

375 Medicine Lodge Hills

- 65 ha approximately 20 km south of Rimbev; features include a hill, covered by aspen and white birch, that is the highest point locally and offers scenic views of the surrounding landscape; good ungulate habitat. Stewards: James Allen, Maxine O'Riordan.

468 O'Chiese

- 372 ha approximately 50 km northwest of Rocky Mountain House; features include extensive forests of white birch with numerous large individual trees, mixedwood forests, peatlands, sedge meadows and shrublands.

396 Spruce Island Lake

- 648 ha approximately 40 km southwest of Athabasca; features include Spruce Island and Horseshoe lakes, numerous smaller water bodies, wetlands, forests, and gently rolling terrain make the site highly attractive for low-impact trail recreation. Stewards: Allen and Arlene Haskin, Clarence Trickey.

519 Tawatinaw

- 800 ha approximately 35 km northeast of Westlock; features include diverse and extensive peatlands and wetlands providing excellent wildlife habitat. Stewards: Jim Lange, Pembina River Fish and Game Association.

Site Additions

275 Coyote Lake

- 65 ha addition; approximately 30 km northeast of Drayton Valley; features include shoreline of Coyote Lake, rolling terrain with a variety of habitat types including sedge meadows, peatlands, shrublands and aspen and spruce forests; recognized as a provincially significant Environmentally Significant Area (ESA). Stewards: Doris and Eric Hopkins, Castledown Junior Forest Wardens.

1 Parkland

- 195 ha added to existing 65-ha site, approximately 30 km southeast of Sherwood Park; features include knob-and-kettle topography, representative of the Cooking Lake moraine; numerous small wetlands and ponds. Stewards: South Cooking Lake Youth Support Association, Ministik Lake Bird Sanctuary Society.

62 North Cooking Lake

- 73 ha added to existing 91-ha site, approximately 25 km east of Edmonton; features include 5 km along the shoreline of North Cooking Lake; wet sedge meadows, aspen/poplar forest. Stewards: Dave McIntosh, Karen Orlando.



Winter Bird Feeding

by Myrna Pearman, author of *Winter Bird Feeding - an Alberta Guide*; illustrations by Gary Ross

The past few years have seen a burgeoning interest in backyard bird feeding. It is a reflection, I guess, of growing public concern about the environment and the desire of an increasingly urbanized population to establish or maintain a link with the natural world around them. Since well-stocked feeders can certainly make winter more bearable for their patrons, a bird feeding program offers to some an altruistic sense of "giving back" to wildlife. Altruism and concern aside, backyard bird feeding is just plain fun. The activities and antics of birds around a feeding station can provide hours of entertainment.

Associated with this increasingly popular hobby has been the proliferation of resource and guide books, the mass production and distribution of bird feeding paraphernalia, and the appearance of specialty stores catering exclusively to the needs of backyard wildlife and backyard wildlife watchers. Backyard bird feeding is now big business!

Setting up a Backyard Bird Feeding Program

A backyard bird feeding program is not difficult to set up. It is likely to be successful, however, only in areas with plenty of trees. Since our wintering birds need trees for both food and shelter, few venture into treeless areas. Feeding programs started in new, barren subdivisions will likely be unsuccessful.

One popular myth about bird feeding is that the birds become totally dependent on feeder food and will simply die should the feeder go empty. Although their chances of survival increase if birds have access to a well-stocked feeding station, they do not become dependent solely on feeder food. Birds exploit many food sources within their winter territory, so a feeding station provides a supplemental, not exclusive, food source. Any species that adopted an "all eggs in one basket" winter feeding strategy would have become extinct eons ago.

Another myth is that bird feeders may interrupt migration behavior. Food availability is not the main factor that

determines migration, so setting out a feeding station in the early fall will not encourage healthy birds to forego or delay their southern sojourn. Interestingly, birds do not migrate out of Alberta simply because of the cold temperatures; several "summer" species have overwintered successfully. The birds that are forced to migrate are those whose food sources (e.g., flying insects or food in or near water) disappear with the arrival of snow and the onset of cold temperatures.

Feeders provide an excellent opportunity for bird behavior watching. Since a feeder provides a continuous supply of food in a confined space, the birds must compete, both with members of their own species and with other species, for the right to dine. Hierarchies are established, with the larger or dominant birds displacing the smaller or subordinate birds.

Feeder birds, like many of their non-feeder counterparts, will hoard food in times of plenty. This behavior is very evident at seed feeding stations, where the birds can be seen packing off the seeds, then tucking them into bark crevices, between spruce needles or even under leaves on the ground. This hoarding behavior is like an avian insurance policy — if enough bits of food are hidden throughout the territory, chances are that some food will be found at a later date.

The Menu

Seeds, suet and gourmet treats can all be offered at outdoor bistros. The type of food offered determines which species come to dine.

Seed Feeding

Seeds attract seed-eating birds. Sunflower seeds, both large striped and small black-oil, are the most popular fare for the widest variety of birds. Larger birds seem to prefer larger seeds, while smaller birds find smaller seeds easier to handle. If both types are mixed together, the birds can pick the type they prefer. During extremely cold spells, you can save the birds a lot of work by putting the sunflowers through a meat grinder or food processor to break up the hulls

(don't blend it until you have sunflower butter). The birds can then extract the meat without having to expend the energy required to break open the seed.

Other popular seeds, especially for the finch species, are Niger (an expensive tropical thistle seed) and canola (rapeseed). Nuts and corn are also a favorite of many species, especially jays.

Since millet (both red and white), canary and safflower seeds are considerably less popular for most bird species except house sparrows (a species most regard with disdain), I never bother with them. The least popular of all seeds are cereal grains and seed mixtures that contain red milo (grain sorghum). Red milo is just a filler seed that is not eaten by any bird. Hardware store varieties of mixed bird seed are usually a waste of money.

Seeds can be offered in a variety of ways. During the spring and fall, migrating sparrows will be attracted to sunflower seeds or white millet spread on the ground. In addition to ground-feeding sparrows, grouse and grosbeaks will also be attracted to seeds on the ground.

It is less wasteful to serve seeds from tray, hopper or tube feeders.

Tray feeders should be covered to protect the seeds from rain and snow. Hopper and tube feeders not only protect the seeds, they dispense them with minimum waste. If you decide on a hopper or tube feeder, get one that is big enough to hold plenty of seed. Otherwise, refilling it frequently may become a monotonous chore.

Seed feeders can also be made from coffee cans, plastic bottles and ice cream pails. Simply cut a hole in the side(s), put in a few seeds and hang from a tree. These types of feeders are fun for children to make.

Feeders can be mounted on poles, attached to balconies, hung from trees or attached to buildings. If possible, set them in a location that offers maximum protection from both the elements and marauding cats.

WHAT YOU TOLD US ABOUT NATURAL AREAS!!

We had a great response to our questionnaire on the Natural Areas program. We received 188 pages of comments from 82 volunteer stewards. There was an amazing amount of consistency in responses, especially in areas of what Natural Areas are and should be, how they should be managed, and public involvement. Below is a summary of those areas of general consistency in responses. On the third page is a summary of major areas of inconsistency in responses. A detailed list of responses is available on request.

Here is what you said!

Your Vision for Natural Areas

- » Natural Areas provide a refuge against burgeoning development and are for species, habitats, ecosystems and people.
- » They are for our "children's children".
- » Natural Areas should see only human footsteps and hear only the voices of enjoyment and the click of a camera.
- » Natural Areas represents a great opportunity to get people involved in conservation and the program could very easily show the way to more ecologically correct land practices.
- » The Natural Areas program is one of the great hopes for putting our environment and ecology in the forefront of our thinking. They can help people explore and 'know' their local connections with nature - once people 'know', they will conserve.

Important Components of Natural Areas

- » Natural Areas must be flexible in terms of types and sizes of sites and in terms of management, which must generally be site-specific.
- » They have a dual purpose of preservation AND appropriate public use.
- » Their future benefits are very important and they must be selected and managed with this in mind.
- » They provide a balance with all the lands that are developed.
- » They are very low cost to the tax payer.
- » They must be part of a protected areas spectrum and overall provincial conservation strategy.

New Natural Areas by the Year 2000

- » 81 out of 82 said YES!!! (and one left this answer blank.) - as long as established areas don't get neglected.
- » The more the better and all across the province. We must establish more Natural Areas. We can't make a Natural Area out of a dream in the future if the land is gone or changed.
- » Priorities need to be set where areas are most threatened and where public interest is greatest.
- » Need to establish Natural Areas to protect unique and special species and features and also to protect areas representative of the province's ecological diversity.
- » The bigger the Natural Area, the better, in order to maximize species and ecological protection but ALL sizes, including small areas and corridors are important, as long as there are lots of them.
- » Size must not only consider where the species or feature of interest is, but also the amount and types of human uses that will be allowed and the need for buffers.
- » Need sites close to urban areas as well as in remote areas, in order to serve both preservation needs and people needs.
- » All Albertans should have close access to a Natural Area.

General Management of Natural Areas

- » Exclude competing interests wherever possible, if such uses are causing damage.
- » Deal with competing land uses and management in general on a site-by-site basis and try to resolve before the site is established using public input.
- » Be sensitive to traditional uses and if there is a problem, over time make the necessary changes through education, zoning and cooperation.
- » Know what the bottom line is in protecting the site and don't be afraid to say NO in some situations.
- » Don't over-manage - use a non-intervention management philosophy wherever possible.
- » Preservation must be given the top management priority and this is what should place limits on all other uses and management practices.
- » Develop a very few general management principles for all Natural Areas, but leave a lot of room for site-specific management.
- » What needs to be managed is man's activities, not nature!

Regulations

- » Regulations should be used very sparingly, as tools only.
- » Manage by education first, land management practices second, and only if all else fails, by regulation.
- » Allow the option of having site-specific regulations where absolutely needed to protect the site from major non-conforming uses.
- » Use regulations only where there is confidence in their enforceability.

Recreation Use

- » Of any permitted uses by the public, appropriate recreation is the highest priority, but this use must too be subordinate to protection.
- » Appropriate recreational activities must be determined on a site-specific basis, as long as they not overall damaging to the site.
- » Hopefully, one day we will learn to take satisfaction in just knowing that "all is well" in the wilderness without always having to use it. - a natural part of low impact living.
- » If any recreational activities should be encouraged, they should be low-intensity, passive use activities such as hiking, nature appreciation, etc.
- » Stay away from the government being involved in facility construction to promote recreation use.
- » Neither just encourage nor tolerate general recreational use, but tailor to suit the individual site, again with protection being the primary focus.
- » Use recreational interests in Natural Areas as an educational opportunity to spark interest in conservation.

Who should do what - THE PUBLIC

- » Everybody can and should be encouraged to play a role.
- » Effective public involvement is the key to success.
- » Particularly work with local people, including adjacent landowners but also include non-locals in public involvement.

- » The public should have as much a role as they wish, from nominating sites, to acting as Volunteer Stewards and helping in the management of sites.
- » The public needs access to information in order to make informed decisions.
- » As well as strong public participation, we need to keep in mind we have a responsibility to future generations to ensure protection of Natural Areas.

Who should do what - VOLUNTEER STEWARDS

- » I take pride in being part of the volunteer program for Natural Areas.
- » The stewards role, to observe, record and report, should remain.
- » Stewards need more training, communications and access to professional staff in all government agencies.

- » The volunteer steward program should be expanded so that as many Albertans as possible become involved in looking after these precious sites.
- » Stewards need more options to have more authority and responsibility on their sites.

Who should do what - INDUSTRY

- » Nobody should be shut out of appropriate involvement.
- » As long as their involvement can be controlled and they can commit to the goals of the program, they should be able to nominate sites, donate lands and dollars to the program, be

volunteer stewards and participate in management teams on site-specific basis.

- » Their main role is financial contributions and agreeing on sites to be protected.

Who should do what - STAFF

General Comments

- » Do what you are doing now, rallying the talent and skills of the people who care about Alberta's natural heritage and banking areas for the future.
- » Staff need a stronger mandate, more resources and higher profile within government.
- » Staff, based on sound biological principles, should set the ground rules and maintain responsibility and accountability.
- » Staff need to be vocal, persistent and effective, show goal-oriented leadership and provide more follow-up to suggestions from stewards.
- » Keep up the good work. Your efforts are really appreciated and they do make a difference. For such a small group, you have accomplished tremendous feats in saving jewels, they may be small and rare so far, but they are very precious. Albertans count on you to continue your role of protecting and promoting Natural Areas.

Plan to continue your dedicated efforts to conserve Alberta's wildlands - never sleep, be over-worked and under-paid and expand on the exceptional job you are doing.

Staff are cooperative and accessible.

Don't sanction abusive uses of Natural Areas - say NO when appropriate!

Specific Comments

- » Continue to establish new sites all over the province.
- » Continue to compile the necessary information, monitor sites and work with the public.
- » Continue to administer, manage and oversee the entire operating program.
- » Keep final management authority with the staff.
- » Keep stewards more informed of activities on their specific sites, give stewards more recognition and provide networking opportunities.
- » Develop more tools and provide more funding to help stewards manage their sites (i.e., more signs).
- » Use the media judiciously, but more effectively.
- » Facilitate conflict resolution.
- » Post more site signs and fence on more sites.
- » Get more focused on public involvement, especially with local communities, local conservation groups, local media, and with volunteer stewards.
- » Work with others as much as possible.

Major Areas of Inconsistent Responses

Promoting recreational uses?

- Don't encourage recreational uses, especially off-highway vehicle use.
- Cooperate and compromise.
- Encourage recreational uses, including off-highway vehicle use.

Allowing ecotourism on Natural Areas

- No, as it is poorly defined, needs more staff to monitor and manage, usually results in the destruction of the protected area and it is difficult to channel the profit into the proper management of the natural area - keep it in parks.
- Yes, if it is appropriate, regulated and enforced and site-specific.
- Encourage it if features can be protected.
- Tolerate it as local tourism destinations sites, but do not encourage it.

- Promote it as ecotourism could help to play a much stronger role in helping to integrate Natural Areas into the socio-economic regional ecosystem.
- Use ecotourism to educate the public and to solicit their support for more protected areas.

Resource use interests

- Absolute no.
- Must find ways to accommodate resource use.
- Must allow historical resource uses to continue.
- Negotiate and compromise.
- Depends on specific site, but should be no net loss of natural features.
- Only under stringent guidelines.
- Better half a loaf than nothing.

Selection of Specific Ideas

- Keep in mind that establishing a site can bring attention and more use to it than just leaving it under lease arrangement.
- The program should be able to acquire lands of natural significance before other departments surplus them.
- All protected area programs should be in one department for the sake of efficiency.
- Natural Areas take over where parks have failed - they are the most flexible Natural Area category that is most easily used by local citizens to gain protection for locally important landscapes.
- Use gap analysis to determine how many Natural Areas are needed and where, not only for representative ecosystems, but also for conservation functions such as reduction of fragmented landscapes. Also use gap analysis to identify environmental education and outdoor recreation needs.
- As part of the efforts of all protected area programs in Alberta, establish 12% of Alberta as protected areas by the year 2000, as consistent with the World Wildlife Fund's Endangered Spaces campaign.
- Establish new Natural Areas in areas of greatest ecological threat - such as prairie and parkland areas, rare and endangered species, montane habitats, old growth forests, areas of high biodiversity, wetlands and riparian areas and wildlife corridors.
- Make sure that Natural Areas are large enough to not only protect the specific features and habitats of interest, but also big enough to allow for appropriate recreation, education and tourism uses.
- All Natural Areas should have an inventory and a management plan.
- Biodiversity protection should be the major management focus.
- Governments cannot manage each and every Natural Area - the public must be used more for help.

- The best way of dealing with competing interests is to make your interest, theirs.
- Create an economic stake in preservation, and support will come pouring in from all sectors.
- Balance regulations with voluntary compliance and balance provincial regulation with local by-laws.
- Monitoring is critical. Since you can't monitor everything, monitor those species and/or features and/or land uses that are good indicators of environmental change, as well as rare and special features.
- Public involvement is the key to successful conservation, but there is difficulty in defining "the public." Get the local people involved wherever possible, as they have a much higher commitment to the area. However, don't put all your eggs in the local support 'basket' as locals often don't recognize the value of their site.
- Public should be called upon once per year, through advertising in local papers, to nominate sites.
- Natural Areas' staff should research solutions to these problems: public liability and property insurance (ie. what about blanket coverage for all volunteer stewards), how to prohibit hunting on some sites, how to stop oil and gas exploration and development on some sites.
- Natural Areas' staff should also conduct regular inspections on all Natural Areas, promote Natural Area philosophies on a local scale, step up advertising and awareness campaigns, complement what stewards cannot do, keep more in touch with stewards, provide more brochures to local town offices and information booths, educate more youth through schools, develop a list of criteria so that the public can nominate sites, establish an endowment fund for people to donate land and money, monitor and manage surrounding lands where possible, develop a map of all Alberta's protected areas and information on each site and how they all contribute to overall protected area goals, initiate arbitration boards to resolve dispute over competing land uses related to Natural Areas.
- Let's act now, before it is too late!!

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT YOUR RESPONSES?

As a first response to the 188 pages of comments from you, the Volunteer Stewards, the Natural Areas' staff are providing information on the following three topics: government re-organization; *Special Places 2000 - Alberta's Natural Heritage*, and; the 1993 Volunteer Steward Conference. Many of your suggestions have now been acted on. Others will be considered as future events unfold.

Government Re-organization

In December 1992, the new premier, Ralph Klein, announced a smaller Cabinet from 28 members to 17. As part of the announcement, the Honourable Ernie Isley was named Minister responsible for Public Lands. The Natural Areas and Volunteer Stewards Programs have been housed within the Public Lands Division for many years.

Premier Klein also announced the appointment of a Transition Management Team to coordinate the

consolidation of departments and consequent human resources issues. Presumably, the exact location and organization of the Natural Areas and Volunteer Steward Programs will be determined as part of the re-organization.

Whatever the location of the programs, your responses will be considered in determining future directions for Natural Areas and for the Volunteer Steward Program.

Special Places 2000: Alberta's Natural Heritage

On November 24, 1992, the Honourable Don Sparrow, then Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation, released the draft document *Special Places 2000: Alberta's Natural Heritage*. This document was also presented on November 15, 1992 by the new Minister of Environmental Protection, the Honourable Brian Evans, at the Tri-Council meeting of Canada's Ministers of Environment, Wildlife and Parks.

Special Places 2000 outlines goals to help Alberta establish a network of protected natural landscapes by the year 2000, as part of Canada's shared goals for protected areas.

Initial steps to establish this network of special places will capitalize on legislation and programs that already exist. Natural Areas play a prominent and distinct role in *Special Places 2000* as part of this overall coordinated protected area effort in Alberta. Ongoing efforts will rely on a systematic approach, close coordination, up-to-date information and progressive partnerships, such as the Volunteer Steward Program.

High priority will be placed on selecting new areas for establishment that represent the province's diverse landscapes. Site selection will also take into account current

issues such as protection of wetlands, old growth forests and special species. Selection criteria will also consider existing resource commitments and future potentials.

There will be effective involvement of the public in all aspects of protected areas to ensure that present and future values are maintained. Individuals and groups will be encouraged to take an active role in becoming stewards. The involvement of people living near protected areas will be especially encouraged.

Special Places 2000 will hopefully stimulate action, on-the-ground. By the year 2000, we should be able to take pride in our comprehensive network of protected areas. Alberta's special protected areas will safeguard the diverse natural landscapes of Alberta as a legacy for future generation.

Your response to our questionnaire were important components of *Special Places 2000*.

If you would like a copy of *Special Places 2000*, please phone us at 427-5209.

Volunteer Steward Conference

Included in this newsletter is the formal announcement of our upcoming Volunteer Steward Conference on June 4-6, 1993. PLEASE PLAN ON ATTENDING.

Many of your responses to our questionnaire have been included in the organization of the conference. The

conference is a very important way that we all can improve our skills, learn new information, develop tools and talk to each other.

We will be using the conference to deal with many of the excellent specific suggestions that you made. See you there!!!

Welcome to the Second Volunteer Steward Conference

Friday to Sunday, June 4 to 6, 1993

WHERE: Rocky Mountain YMCA, 80 km west of Calgary, just 8 km off the Trans-Canada Highway

Rocky Mountain YMCA is a spacious, full-service conference centre and children's camp nestled on 1000 acres of forest and open meadows, with a backdrop of the Rocky Mountains. You can see spring bloom in the mountains while birdwatching and nature walking on the site, and on field trips to nearby Natural Areas. You will have the opportunity to learn about ecology and acquire field identification skills through outdoor field work and indoor study sessions. With a full-service dining area and a fireside lounge, stewards will be able to comfortably develop friendships and establish networks.

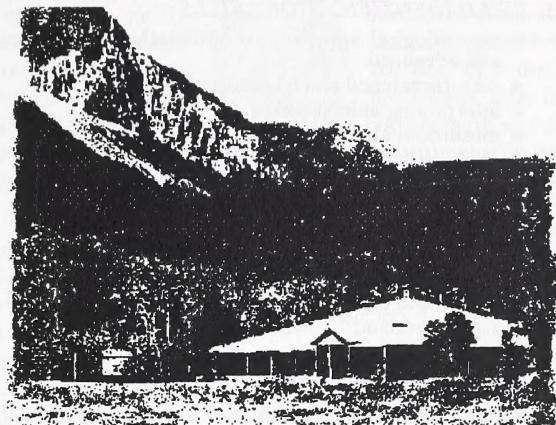
There is overnight accommodation in dormitories with bunk beds for 150 people. Camping will be available at the Bow Valley Campground, just 10 km from the Rocky Mountain YMCA.

WHO CAN ATTEND? All volunteer stewards are invited including those not yet assigned a site.

WHY HAVE A VOLUNTEER STEWARD CONFERENCE?

The conference is designed to accomplish the following:

- provide an opportunity for volunteer stewards to meet each other and form working relationships;
- encourage two-way sharing of information and resources between stewards and the staff of both the Natural and Protected Areas Section and other parts of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife;
- provide opportunities for stewards to improve their stewardship skills as well as their knowledge of natural resource management and the Natural and Protected Areas Program;



- promote and recognize the current accomplishments of the Natural and Protected Areas Program and volunteer stewards; and
- inform stewards about, and involve them in the future planning for the Natural and Protected Areas Program.

CONFERENCE FEES

- We have applied for grants to assist with the costs of the conference. The full conference package including registration, accommodation and meals for the weekend will be a maximum cost to you of \$95. In addition to the full conference package, there will be other options available, including packages for single-day registration with/without meals. There is no additional charge for staying at the Rocky Mountain YMCA if you register for the full conference package.
- We hope to subsidize conference expenses for stewards, and expect to know the results of the grant applications by the end of January. Please do not send your cheque at this time.

...continued on back

Detach and Return

1993 VOLUNTEER STEWARD CONFERENCE

Name: _____

Natural Areas Assigned (if any): _____

Phone: Day: _____ Evening: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code _____

I am planning to attend this conference

Yes _____ No _____

We need to hear from you!

The conference committee is creating fascinating opportunities for you to network, learn, explore and socialize. In late January, we will know the amount of grant monies available to subsidize expenses, and will have finalized registration procedures. The April 1993 newsletter will include the final program and registration form. We need to know, by February 15, 1993, how many stewards are planning to attend the conference. Please call us, or return this form, as soon as possible.

Please share your inspired ideas, thoughtful suggestions and hopes for this conference:

PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE TOPICS

The conference program will feature four main themes, which are based on an assessment of your conference needs.

1. FIELD IDENTIFICATION SKILLS

- an ecological approach to birdwatching: beginners and advanced
- rare, threatened and endangered species
- interpreting animal signs
- mushroom identification
- an ecological approach to plant study
- reptile and amphibian identification

2. ECOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

- wetlands
- river corridors
- forests and old-growth forests
- aspen parkland
- mountains
- indicators of ecological health

3. WORKING WITH PEOPLE

- conservation education
- ecotourism
- generating community support of Natural Areas
- volunteer steward orientation and training programs
- developing and sharing land ethics
- volunteer empowerment

4. SITE MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

- how to inspect a Natural Area
- restoring natural communities
- developing a site management plan
- monitoring species and ecological health
- research projects on natural and protected areas
- how to designate a Natural Area
- tools for volunteer stewards

AND MORE

- field trips to nearby Natural Areas
- slide show of Natural Areas
- nature films
- book sale

PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

(A finalized program will be featured in the April 1993 newsletter)

Friday, June 4

6:30 p.m. Registration and check-in
7:00 p.m. Special opening event
9:00 p.m. "Meet the Stewards" social

Saturday, June 5

Early morning birdwatching and informal nature walks
8:30 a.m. Breakfast
9:30 a.m. Morning sessions
12:00 p.m. Lunch
2:00 p.m. Afternoon sessions
6:00 p.m. Volunteer Steward Recognition Banquet
7:00 p.m. Evening program

Sunday, June 6

Early morning birdwatching and informal nature walks
8:30 a.m. Breakfast
9:30 a.m. Morning sessions
11:30 a.m. Conference closing
12:00 p.m. Lunch and homeward bound

Attention: Please note that the date of the conference is June 4-6, 1993.

Detach and Return



We need to hear from you, so...

*Give us a Call at:
or Fax the form to:*

**427-5209
422-4244**

or Mail the form to:

*Natural and Protected Areas Section
Public Lands Division
Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife
9915 - 108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2C9*

INSERT

Suet

Suet, the hard fat found around the kidneys and heart of cattle and sheep, is a high-energy food that is preferred by insect-eating birds. The easiest way to serve suet is to put raw chunks into an onion or wire mesh bag and hang it from a tree. To add a gourmet flair, render (melt) the suet and stir in such delectable delights as peanut butter, corn meal, bran, chopped nuts, crushed eggshells, rolled oats, chopped fruit, cat food or dog food. Don't bother mixing in seeds -- they become slippery and soggy, so are hard to extract and difficult to eat.

While the mixture is still warm, smear it onto large pine cones, suet logs or even directly on tree trunks.

Gourmet Treats

Several types of gourmet treats can also be offered. Bone sawdust, the material generated when an animal is butchered, can be offered in the same manner as suet. Pastry is also a popular feeder food, although it is usually eaten only by house sparrows. Other novelty food items that can be offered include fruit, berries, crushed eggshells, cat food (some claim that salmon-flavored Wiskas is the most favored), dog food, mealworms, cooked sweet potatoes, chopped vermicelli and boiled potatoes. If you find an old wasp or hornet's nest out in the woods, spread it out on a tray feeder for the birds to pick through.

Who's Coming to Dinner

Winter is a great time to birdwatch. The few species that remain are highly visible, and those that are attracted to feeder fare can be easily enticed to dine in areas that can be watched from the comfort of our kitchens or living rooms.

Although about 60 species of Alberta birds will patronize feeders, fewer than 20 are regular customers.

Woodpeckers are among the most popular feeder visitors. Two species, the small downy woodpecker and the larger hairy woodpecker, are both attracted to feeders that offer suet or sunflower seeds. Feeder operators lucky enough to live near a mature, wooded area may also have the striking pileated woodpecker come in to dine on suet.

Members of the jay family are also frequent feeder patrons. The most common jay at feeders, the blue jay, is a beautifully colored bully that loves to dine on corn, whole or shelled peanuts, sunflower seeds and suet or bone sawdust. His arrival at the feeder is often announced by a shriek that sends all the other birds scurrying for cover--the blue jay then moves in and "pigs out". Jays are very intelligent and very adept at hoarding food.

Magpies are probably the most maligned of all feeder birds. In spite of their beauty and intelligence, their penchant for stealing feeder food and



harassing other birds has earned them an unsavory reputation. While suet is still their favorite feeder food, they will also readily dine on sunflower seeds.

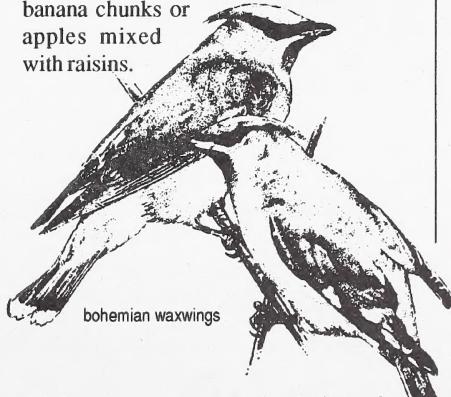
Of all the birds that visit our feeders during the winter, chickadees are the best loved. A typical winter day in the life of a flock of these fiesty little cherubs is spent on the ever-important quest for food. Dining on suet and sunflower seeds at a feeding station, they also search the trunks and branches of trees throughout their winter territory, looking for insects and other morsels. The black-capped chickadee is the most common chickadee in Alberta, while its cousin, the boreal chickadee, is found wherever evergreens are abundant.



A winter bird commonly overlooked is the elusive brown creeper. Flying to the base of a tree, this nondescript little brown bird hitches its way slowly upward around the trunk to the top, then moves to the next tree for a repeat performance. If you have conifers in your yard, chances are you will be able to attract creepers by smearing suet or bone sawdust directly on a tree trunk.

Nuthatches have the unusual ability to view the world upside down. In contrast to the creeper, these short-tailed acrobats usually start at the top of a tree and work their way down. The red-breasted nuthatch, the smaller of the two Alberta species, prefers to live in the vicinity of coniferous trees. Meanwhile, its larger cousin, the white-breasted nuthatch, is most commonly found in mature, deciduous woods. Both will dine on nuts, sunflower seeds and suet. Their name comes from their habit of hammering (hacking) nuts to open them.

Bohemian waxwings are irregular feeder patrons. They seem to prefer dining in the wild but have been known to come to feeders that offer chopped fruit, including frozen banana chunks or apples mixed with raisins.



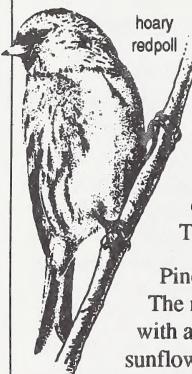
Of the native sparrows, the dark-eyed junco is the most frequent feeder bird. It will come to tray or ground feeders that offer sunflower seeds or millet. It is most common during spring and fall, though it occasionally overwinters. Other native sparrows,



continued on page 4

including American tree, white-crowned, white-throated, song, fox, Harris' and Lincoln's sparrows, usually visit feeders only during migration.

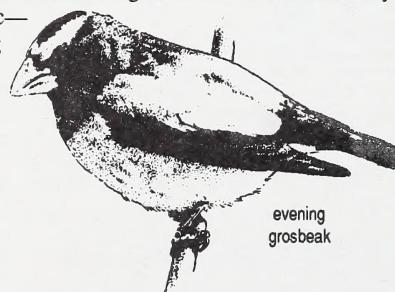
House sparrows, unlike native sparrows, are members of an Old World weaver finch family that was introduced into North America in the mid-1800s. Common feeder birds, they are aggressive, persistent and intelligent. They often dominate feeders, especially those in urban areas or farmyards. For some feeder operators, the cheerful chirping of house sparrows, especially on the coldest winter day, is welcomed. Others dislike them for their domination of feeders and insatiable appetites. House sparrows seem to have recently acquired a taste for sunflower seeds and suet, so discouraging them from a feeding station can be frustrating. Some people serve canola from a tube feeder with small portals, because such feeders seem to deter these birds. Others suggest setting out two feeding stations—one for the house sparrows and one for the rest. Offer the sparrows their favorite fare of mixed bird-seed or bread and other stale pastry.



Redpolls are thought to be the "toughest" of all songbirds. They have to be, because they nest in the Arctic and come down to balmy Alberta to overwinter. There are two species of redpolls, which are so named because of their red cap (poll). The common redpoll is more abundant than the hoary redpoll, although it is often difficult to distinguish between the two. The hoary redpoll is slightly larger with a smaller bill and is usually frostier and paler overall. Redpolls can be enticed to ground, tray or tube feeders that offer Niger or canola seed. They also love sunflower seeds, especially if they are ground up.

Pine grosbeaks are large finches that appear to be increasing in abundance. The males are crimson in color, while the females and young males are gray with a rusty-orange tinge to their crowns, necks and rumps. They love striped sunflower seeds served from tray or ground feeders.

Evening grosbeaks are also popular feeder birds. They are easily distinguished by their yellow, black and white colorations and their thick, cone-shaped, seed-crushing bills. Their gregarious nature and repertoire of pleasant calls, bring cheer to a cold winter's day. Like the other finches, grosbeaks are erratic—plentiful one year then absent the next. Evening grosbeaks dine exclusively on sunflower seeds served from ground or tray feeders.



Recommended Reading

Pearman, Myrna. 1989. Winter Bird Feeding - An Alberta Guide. Ellis Bird Farm Ltd.
Waldon, Bob. 1990. A Prairie Guide to Feeding Winter Birds. Prairie Books.

North American Prairie Conference Summary

Windsor, Ontario, August 6 - 9, 1992

by Joyce Gould, Natural and Protected Areas

I had the privilege of attending the North American Prairie Conference held in Windsor, Ontario in August of 1992. The conference was entitled *Spirit of the Land: Our Prairie Legacy* and its main focus was tall grass prairies, the most endangered habitat in North America.

Managers of such habitats gave example after example of efforts to rehabilitate and restore such a prairie, all at a very high expense. The three-day conference included sessions entitled Ontario Prairies, Aboriginal Perspective, Environmental Education, Managing the Human Element in a Fragile Ecosystem, Ecological Studies, Biodiversity, Landscape Design, Restoration, Fire Ecology, and Preservation and Management.

Attendees were offered the choice of several field trips, for example, Ojibway Prairie--a 64-acre tall grass prairie remnant at Windsor; Walpole Island--a tall grass prairie located on an island in the St. Clair River with over 500 species of vascular plants, of which over 100 are rare in Ontario; and Pelee Island--an example of an alvar prairie, fire management, quantitative sampling, lepidoptera identification and grass and sedge identification. I attended the combined Ojibway Prairie and fire management trips. Both were excellent.

Those of us who gave presentations on the mixed grass prairie were amazed at the number of audible sighs from the audience when we showed slides of our expanses of grassland devoid of any evidence of humans. It was very clear that we in Alberta have treasures that are worth keeping. By protecting these areas now, we will avoid the mistakes made in other regions.

Proceedings of the conference will be published. Watch the newsletter for further information.

Site Activities

October 1, 1992 - November 30, 1992

Newly Designated Sites

(approved by Order In Council & Regulation)

Natural Areas

Please see the front page of the newsletter.

Ecological Reserves

- Egg Island Ecological Reserve

Provincial Parks/Recreation Areas

- Brown-Lowery Provincial Park (status changed from Provincial Recreation Area)
- 29 Provincial Recreation Areas (formerly local campgrounds administered by other agencies).

Advertisement of Intention to Designate New Sites

(notice placed in local newspaper advising of 60-day public comment period that ended on December 4, 1992)

- Bellis North (363): 1088.5 ha
- Black Fox Island (540): 12.6 ha
- Bridge Lake (48): 113.7 ha
- Child Lake Meadows (536): 388.5 ha
- Edgar T. Jones (539): 85.1 ha
- Genesee (224): 120 ha addition; open house held at Genesee community hall.
- High Island (544): 6.9 ha
- J.J. Collett (145): 14 ha addition
- Muskiki Lake (438): 125.9 ha
- Nevis (411): 63.3 ha
- Newton Lake (516): 34.0 ha
- Sand Lake (26): 2868.0 ha
- Saskatoon Mountain (420): 626.1 ha
- Sherwood Park (62): 5.3 ha addition
- Whitecourt Mountain (528): 544.4 ha
- Yates (43): 164.4 ha

Sites Reserved Under a Protective Notation

- Caribou River (433): lands added

Site Nominations for New Natural Areas

Castle Rocks

Little Grassy

Keg River

Other Changes

- **Battle Creek** (378): name changed to Mount Butte Natural Area (378)
- **Battle Lake South** (220): site added to Mount Butte Natural Area (378)

New Reports Available

- Alberta Plants: Fungi Master Species List: Species Groups Checklists
- 1991/92 Annual Report - Natural and Protected Areas
- 1991/92 Annual Report - Volunteer Steward Program
- Special Places 2000 - discussion paper on Alberta's Protected Areas Strategy to the Year 2000
- Plant Checklists - Bow Valley-Yamnuska; Cardinal River; Wagner; Winagami-Kimiwan

Management Plans

- **Fourth Creek** (503): revised draft plan reviewed
- **Saskatoon Mountain** (420) final management plan approved
- **Sherwood Park** (212): Interpretive Plan initiated and public meeting held
- **Tripoli Ridge** (342): Coal Branch Access Management Plan advisory committee met to discuss draft plan (area subject to plan includes the proposed Tripoli Ridge Natural Area) draft plan recommends designated route for recreational vehicles within the proposed Natural Area

Management Activities

- **Beehive** (68): Off-highway vehicle regulation passed prohibiting recreational use of vehicles within natural area
- **Kilini Creek** (221): garbage removed; pit privy holes filled in
- **North Cooking Lake** (62): request to ConservAction program for pipe fencing
- **Town Creek** (510): request to gate access road through site approved
- **Wagner** (142): boardwalk sections installed along the marl pond and cabin trails

Research Activities

- **Canmore Flats** (408) study of overwintering trout in Bill Griffiths Creek

Surface Activities

- **Edson West** (452): Alberta Transportation and Utilities has proposed a new road through site
- **George Lake** (266): seismic program approved subject to no vehicles, no new cutting and only existing cutlines to be used
- **Gooseberry** (94): seismic program approved subject to no new cutting, no vehicles, no access across wetlands and hand-stringing geophone lines
- **Majeau Lake** (272): pipeline, adjacent to an existing pipeline, approved subject to minimizing disturbance
- **Mount Butte** (378): seismic program rejected unless shifted to use existing cutlines
- **North of Bruderheim** (71): permission for military exercise denied.
 - military exercise (communications) approved
 - conversion of right-of-entry disposition to a pipeline disposition
- **Northwest of Bruderheim** (70): military exercise (communications) approved
 - conversion of right-of-entry disposition to a pipeline disposition
- **Pembina-Moon River** (135): seismic program approved subject to no new cutting, no vehicles and hand-stringing of geophone lines
- **Redwater** (69): two military exercises (communications; winter camping; foot travel) approved
 - conversion of right-of-way disposition to a pipeline disposition
- **Spruce Island Lake** (396): county is proposing to re-align road
- **Washout-Saskatchewan** (302): surface materials lease, for sand and gravel on adjacent land (gravel bars in river) renewed by Alberta Transportation and Utilities

Wildlife Conservation Directory Now Available

A directory is now available that lists opportunities for volunteers to participate in wildlife conservation projects in Alberta.

Working With Wildlife: A Volunteer's Directory was compiled by volunteer Carla Palaschuk. Its purpose is to attract and inform prospective volunteers who want to become involved with various wildlife conservation projects in the province.

The directory outlines general conservation projects, bird projects, nature centres, science and technology hotlines and parks. It also describes the duration and aims of projects, the duties and qualifications of volunteers, and who to contact for further information. *Working With Wildlife* was produced jointly by the Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division and the Canadian Wildlife Service. This 1992 edition is a revision of previous directories published by the Canadian Wildlife Service in 1985 and 1987.

If you would like a copy, please send your request to:

Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife
Wildlife Management Branch
9945 - 108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2G6



Sharing Our Natural Areas With Young Ones Year-round

by Pat Wishart and Dianne Hayley, authors of the *Knee High Nature in Alberta* series

Every nature outing is an adventure. There is a feeling of joy and anticipation in exploring the natural world. What shall we see, hear, feel or smell?

It is fun for adults and children to share in nature adventures. Getting away from the rush of city life and entering a Natural Area is like going on a holiday. It relaxes the nerves and everyone has a feeling of peace and contentment.

How can we best plan for a happy nature adventure?

Make sure everyone dresses for the weather. A hat and suntan lotion are musts for sunny summer days. In winter, remember that the greatest heat loss is through the extremities. Believe it or not, a hat can help keep the feet warm, and mittens are warmer than gloves, of course. Dress in layers to accommodate changes in the weather. Take along a little backpack to carry excess clothing. If there is a lot of snow on the ground, wear boots instead of running shoes.

A snack is a must for young children. A picnic in the winter is fun too. Carry a picture book or short story in the pack to share at lunch time.

Are mom and dad enthusiastic about this outing? The children easily pick up their parents' attitudes. Adults must have patience and be aware that young children might not have the stamina to travel long distances. Remember the hike to a site has a return trip.

A few years ago, one of us took a five-year-old daughter on a long summer hike into the Tonquin Valley in Jasper. We had increased our stamina gradually to prepare for the trip, but we misjudged the distance to the fishing camp at the Amethyst Lakes and the last 8 km took forever. Our daughter vowed she would never go on another walk again! After a couple of days of rest and fishing she was fine, but it took several weeks before she trusted us enough to stop asking, "Is it far?"

Some young children need reassurance about going into the woods. They might worry that lions, tigers or bears are going to eat them up. It is comforting for both children and adults to know that most wild animals that live in Alberta are afraid of people and want to avoid any contact. It is truly a wonderful and exciting event to actually see a wild animal. Adults should be aware of potential dangers, however, if the Natural Area is in bear country.

Use all your senses and be receptive to what surrounds you. Feel the wind, hear the chickadees, see the bright berries. Sometimes just to explore is enough, other times a walk needs to be more focused. The following are suggestions that do focus the senses.

Tracking

Winter is a great time to see tracks. Walk around in the snow, identify your own tracks, then the tracks of the others in your family. Who has the biggest footprints? Who has the weirdest?

Look for wild animal tracks beside shrubs or bird feeders. Can you find any mouse holes? Look at the layers of snow. Where do the mice live? Do you see where their tiny tracks lead from their holes in the snow and into the shrubs?

Warm up by playing "Follow the Leader." Do you remember falling backwards into the snow and making "angels" when you were young? It is a refreshing position to view the clouds through the trees and listen to the birds.

Trees

Trees never complain, but we often take them for granted. Look for grandparent trees. Can you find any big, wrinkled trees near the path? Can you find any that are more than one hug around? How many arms does it take to circle a tree? Older children can measure their circumference. Adopt a grandparent tree. In the spring, you can find out if it is a grandmother or grandfather tree. Can you find it again? Check on it weekly or whenever you visit your Natural Area. Are there any insects hiding in the wrinkled bark? Think of words to describe the tree. Think of a name for it. Note the location of other trees. Do you wonder why the evergreens grow in certain places? Look for baby Christmas trees. Conifers are easy to age; each whorl of branches indicates one year.

Look for Homes

Who made their homes in these woods last summer? Bird nests, from the summer, are easily seen in the winter. How could tools such as a beak and two skinny feet be used to construct such a neat nest? On the other hand, the summer homes of the red squirrel, made from grass, generally look untidy and are rarely used in the winter. Watch for their middens and underground holes. Do you see any wasps' nests? If there is a pond in the area, check for beaver homes and muskrat push-ups. Remember, the ice around a beaver lodge will be thin because of the activity of the beavers as they swim to and from their winter food supply.

Listen

Take your mittens and gently shine up your ears so they are in good listening form. Walk awhile, then stop and listen. What sounds do you hear? If the day is reasonably warm, sit and listen. Be still and try to feel that you are a part of this community. Maybe paper bunny ears will help you hear better.

Look for Animal Signs

Is this a good place to come for lunch? Has a deer or moose chewed a willow or dogwood branch? Moose love to eat the red-osier dogwood twigs. Have mice nibbled the bark? Have hares chewed the bark from branches that have fallen to the ground? Can you see how the beaver, by gnawing down trees, has helped the hare find food? Do the animal droppings beside the branches or trees help tell you which animal was there? Is there a story in the snow?

Color Watch

Have the children look for the color red in nature. It is amazing how many colors you can see in winter. Look, too, for brightly colored lichens.

Camouflage

Play hide-and-seek with white scraps of fake fur. Take turns hiding the scraps in the snow. Make sure you mark off a short area with sticks and place the scraps between the sticks. If you don't, chances are you will never find them again until next spring.

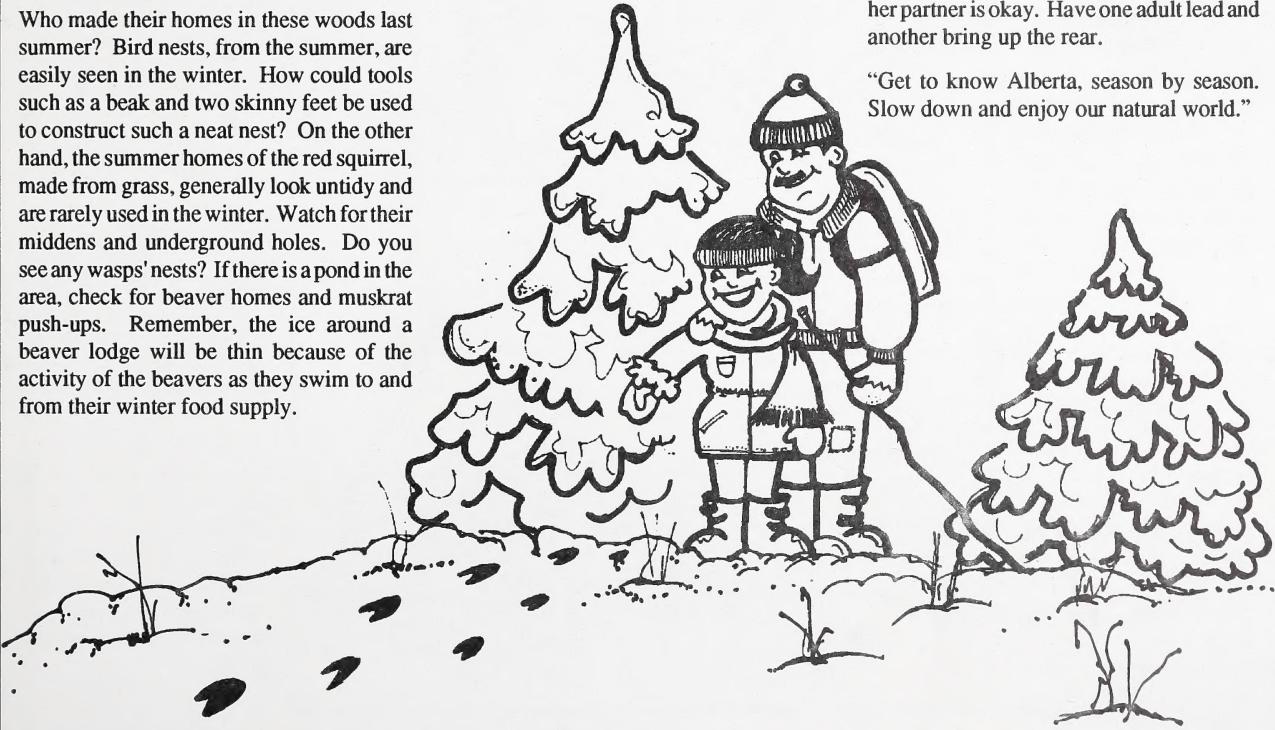
Pretend

Pretend to be an animal that lives in the woods. Practise its skills of walking quietly, crouching low, "freezing" and listening.

Group Walks

The adult who takes a group of children on an outing should first check to make sure everyone is suitably dressed, then decide on a signal. The signal can be a coyote howl, a chickadee or duck call or whatever, just something to make sure the children know that when they hear the signal, they must gather around an adult. Have a practice session to make sure everyone responds to the signal. Then have each child choose a buddy before setting out on the trail. As the group walks, call out occasionally, "Find your buddy." Each buddy should check for frost nip or sunburn or just make sure his/her partner is okay. Have one adult lead and another bring up the rear.

"Get to know Alberta, season by season. Slow down and enjoy our natural world."



Raptor Migration Across the Kananaskis Valley

September 18 - November 1, 1992

by Des Allen, steward for Mount Lorette Natural Area

In the October 1992 issue of *The Steward*, an article described the discovery of a significant raptor migration across the Mount Lorette Natural Area. Golden eagles passed in large numbers toward the northwest between March 20 and March 28. In addition to the 383 golden eagles, observers recorded 21 bald eagles, 4 Cooper's hawks, 2 undetermined accipiters, 1 gyrfalcon and 1 unidentified falcon.

The golden eagles appeared from the southeast near Mount McDougall and Old Baldy, and used updrafts to skim northwestward above the Fisher Range until they reached the Kananaskis River Valley. There they soared over the unnamed peak on the valley's southeast side to gain height for the power glide across to Mount Lorette on the northwest side. At Mount Lorette, they soared again before disappearing to the northwest. Although we found it necessary to name various peaks to help keep track of the birds' travels, only the pet name of "Mount Patrick" appears here, to represent the unnamed peak mentioned above.

The golden eagles travelled almost exclusively through a 300-m wide corridor, entering and leaving at approximately the same points. The other raptor species passed in a less organized manner, following much the same route but using a wider corridor.

Several questions arose:

1. Would returning birds use the same route in the fall?
2. Exactly how many raptors migrate through?
3. Did weather affect the use of the route?
4. Why was this route chosen over the higher and parallel range of mountains

5. Where were the birds going to or coming from?

Peter Sherrington and I sought some answers during the summer and fall months. Peter, myself, and several observers have visited the site, amassing 650 observer hours and 120 commuting hours of driving. In total, Peter made visits on over 50 days in 1992.

As a result, more questions have arisen than have been answered but that is just part of the great game!

The first two questions were answered between September 18 and November 1, 1992. The first golden eagle appeared over Mount Lorette on September 18, while the 2043rd and last of the season was counted on November 1 by Peter Sherrington.

Other observers were out along the foothills. In one day, at Windy Point near the Sheep River, over 600 golden eagles were seen by Wayne Smith. Had these birds come past Mount Lorette and somehow veered off course by some 24 km to the east? We do not think so; there is probably another more diffuse migration that takes place along the higher foothills. Much work remains to be done in years to come.



Besides golden eagles, many other raptors passed Mount Lorette. We counted 196 bald eagles, 4 northern harriers, 194 sharp-shinned hawks, 36 Cooper's hawks, 143 goshawks, 25 red-tailed hawks, 3 broad-winged hawks, 16 rough-legged hawks, 3 merlins, 2 American kestrels and 1 gyrfalcon. Almost all these raptors arrived from the northeast from down the Kananaskis Valley, thus they arrived almost at right angles to the golden eagles. Once at Mount Lorette, all the species more or less joined the usual route crossing the valley towards Mount Patrick and the Fisher Range. The smaller birds were sometimes hard to pick out, especially when a number of golden eagles were going through at once. The smaller raptors tended to be overlooked in the excitement, and, as a result, our counts of those species may be low.

The migration route itself was not apparently affected by the weather, although the numbers of golden eagles varied with temperature, wind and cloud. During poorer weather, fewer birds would go through. When cloud formed above any peak along the route, the stream of migrants would immediately stop moving.

Why do the golden eagles follow the route they do? We observed that the limestone rock formations (Mississippian and Devonian in age) have been upturned identically in both Mount Lorette and Mount Patrick. In fact, these structures continue southeastward along the Fisher Range and northwestward from Mount Lorette through Mount McGillivray and across the Bow River Valley to Grotto Mountain and Mount Charles Stewart. The result is a straight line of ridges and peaks with steep southwest-facing rock slopes to deflect the prevailing southwest winds upwards and catch the rays of the low spring and fall sunlight. The rock heats and adds a thermal effect to the updrafts. The line of ridges and peaks is relatively low (8000-9000 ft.) and cloud-free, relative to the parallel line of mountains to the west (often over 10 000 ft.) which includes such formidable peaks as Kidd, Sparrowhawk, Bogart, Lougheed and Rundle. We noticed that Mount Kidd was usually first to become shrouded in storm or cloud. Many times while travelling from Calgary to Lorette, we saw that while the foothills as far as Morley flats were heavily overcast and the Mount Kidd, Bogart and Lougheed peaks were obscured in cloud, the Fisher Range and its continuation through Mount Lorette were clear.

This line of mountains then has a number of advantages over its neighbor:

1. continuity in the direction the eagles wish to fly;
2. good updrafts and thermals;
3. very often free of cloud; and
4. few barriers for effortless flight (the only barriers of any magnitude are the valleys of the Bow and Kananaskis Rivers, which are easily glided over after brief soaring spirals above adjacent peaks).

Peter Sherrington has started collecting data about golden eagle migration to prepare for scientific publication, possibly a book. If any readers have any information on raptor migration, please contact him at R.R. #2, Cochrane, Alberta, T0L 0W0, phone 932-5183. Des Allen can be contacted at 3135 Upper Place, Calgary, Alberta, T2N 4H2, phone 282-7543.

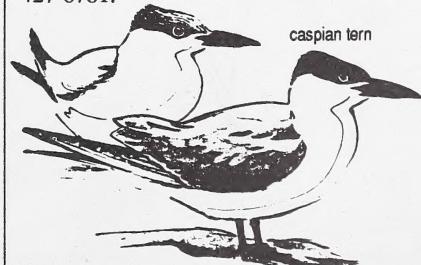
Egg Island Established as an Ecological Reserve

Egg Island, located within Lake Athabasca about 50 km northeast of Fort Chipewyan, was approved by Order In Council on October 15, 1992 as Alberta's 14th ecological reserve. The establishment of Egg Island was officially acknowledged along with six new natural areas at a Tri-Council meeting of Federal/Provincial Ministers of Parks, Fish and Wildlife and Environment in Aylmer, Quebec on November 25, 1992.

Egg Island, approximately 0.6 acres in size, is designated as a "special ecological reserve" because it contains the only consistent nesting site in Alberta of the rare Caspian tern, a colonial nesting species. It is believed that Caspian terns have nested on this island since the turn of the century. The national Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada lists the Caspian tern as a rare species. In addition to California gulls, which also nest on the island, Arctic terns and parasitic jaegers are other bird species that can be observed in the area.

Ecological reserves are areas selected for their natural values and contain "special" or "unique" examples of Alberta's natural, biological and physical features or representative examples of Alberta's natural landscapes. The purpose of ecological reserves is to conserve and protect these features and landscapes for research, education and heritage appreciation.

For more information on Egg Island or Alberta's other 13 ecological reserves, contact Wayne Nordstrom, Ecological Reserves Planner, Alberta Parks Service at 427-6781.



Return Address:

Natural and Protected Areas Program
4th floor, 9915 - 108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2C9

This newsletter is published quarterly by the Natural and Protected Areas Program of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

Forest Management In Cypress Hills Provincial Park

By: Dawn Dickinson, Grasslands Naturalists

April 1992 marked the completion of a five-year pilot plan of limited clear-cut logging, authorized by Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation in Cypress Hills Provincial Park. With the announcement that the management plan for Cypress Park was open to public review and input, the Grasslands Naturalists Society of Medicine Hat have been looking into the issue of forest management in the park.

The society obtained a grant from the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation to hire a consultant to provide an independent review of forest management options for the park.

The consultant's report, *Recommendations Related to a Comprehensive Forest Management Plan for Cypress Hills Provincial Park, Alberta*, was completed by Dr. Everett Peterson and Merle Peterson in December 1991. Among the authors' 22 key conclusions was the recommendation that clear-cutting be discontinued because it was not contributing significantly to the public plan's stated objectives of fuel reduction and provision of fireguards.

The Grasslands Naturalists followed up on this report by organizing and hosting a forest management workshop in Medicine Hat in October 1992. Its purpose was to facilitate discussion of forest management goals appropriate to Cypress Hills and to find ways of achieving those goals. The workshop was funded by the Federation of Alberta Naturalists, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Alberta Native Plant Society, the Alberta Wildlife Association and the Natural and Protected Areas Program of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife. The proceedings will be printed by Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

Participants at the workshop were from Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Montana. Foresters from the Canadian National Parks Service and the Alberta and U.S. Forest Services, plant ecologists, provincial park administrators from Alberta and Saskatchewan, wildlife biologists and representatives of conservation organizations

and the Cypress Hills Grazing Association all shared a diversity of ideas and expertise. Papers were presented the first morning, followed by a field trip in the afternoon and discussion the next day.

Protection of the biological diversity and cultural and wildlife values of the Cypress Hills was recognized by all participants to be dependent on managing the two provincial parks in Alberta and Saskatchewan, the Fort Walsh National Historic Park and adjacent private and leased lands as an entire ecological unit. The unit was named the greater Cypress Hills ecosystem. Participants recommended that a locally based working group should be formed to advance the integration of ecosystem, cultural, economic and wildland values in the management of these lands. One member, from the Grasslands Naturalists, the Cypress Hills Heritage Association, the Cypress Hills Grazing Association and the Alberta Wilderness Association--volunteered to get an interprovincial working group for the Cypress Hills up and running. It will be a consensus-seeking group which will be open to all stakeholders willing to commit time and energy to its goals.

The establishment of so much common ground among diverse individuals and interest groups was a major achievement of the workshop. The Grasslands Naturalists Society hopes that it will mark the beginning of an evolving and shared vision in the management of this unique and beautiful landscape.

